

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 25-48, 60-63 and 76-99 are presented for consideration. Claims 25, 37, 60, 62, 76, 79, 82, 84, 88 and 94 are independent. Claims 100 and 101 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. Claims 88 and 90 have been amended to clarify features of the subject invention. Support for these changes can be found in the original application, as filed.

Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicants note with appreciation that claims 25-48, 60-63, 76-87 and 94-99 have been allowed, and that claims 90-92 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form. Applicants earnestly believe, however, that they should be entitled to the protection afforded by independent claim 88, as presented. Therefore, claims 90-92 have not been so rewritten at this time.

Applicant requests favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection set forth in the above-noted Office Action.

Claims 88, 89, 93, 100 and 101 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,964,940 to Auvert et al. Applicants submit that this patent does not teach many features of the present invention, as previously recited in these claims. Therefore, this rejection is respectfully traversed. Nevertheless, as discussed above, claims 100 and 101 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer, while independent claim 88 has been amended to amplify the distinctions between the present invention and the cited art.

In one aspect of the invention, independent claim 88 recites an exposure apparatus that includes a chamber which incorporates an optical element, a closed vessel which surrounds the chamber, and the member which supports the chamber. The member is coupled to the closed vessel via a deformable member and the member has a portion which passes through the closed vessel.

Applicants submit that the cited art does not teach or suggest such features of the present invention as recited in independent claim 88.

The Auvert et al. patent relates to a laser microbeam machine for acting on thin film objects. The laser microbeam machine is provided in a sealed enclosure. The machine includes displacement mechanisms (58, 60, 62 and 64) between a reaction chamber 20 and a sealed enclosure 10. The sealed enclosure 10 has a bottom 12 as one of its elements.

Applicants submit, however, that the Auvert et al. patent does not teach or suggest the salient features of Applicant's present invention as recited in independent claim 88. Specifically, Applicants submit that the Auvert et al. patent does not teach or suggest at least the feature of the member of the present invention recited in that claim, which supports the recited chamber, in which the member is coupled to the closed vessel via a deformable member and has a portion which passes through the closed vessel. Rather, in the device in the Auvert et al. patent, the bottom 12 does not pass through the enclosure 10. Further, in that arrangement, the reaction 20 chamber will necessarily be influenced by deformation of the enclosure 10. Applicants' present invention overcomes such drawbacks associated with conventional devices.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicants submit that the present invention, as recited in independent claim 88, also is patentably defined over the cited art.

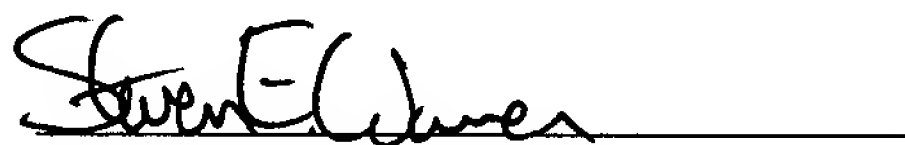
Dependent claims 89-93 also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in independent claim 88. Further individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicants further submit that this Amendment After Final Rejection clearly places this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicants believed that the prior Amendment placed the application in condition for allowance. Accordingly, entry of the instant Amendment, as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is requested under 37 CFR 1.116.

Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejection set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are also requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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